



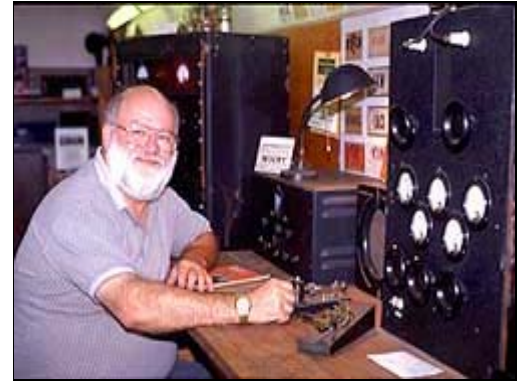
# The ARRLWeb Extra for Members Only

## Mobile Amateur Radio Museum Making the Rounds

NEWINGTON, CT, Jun 17, 1999--Like the traveling circus, John Dilks, K2TQN, has taken his show on the road. Ever since he started collecting vintage radio gear back in the 1950s, Dilks, 57, says it's been his desire and goal to have a radio museum. His wife "wasn't too keen" on the idea of his setting up the museum in their Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey, home, however, and his location is not exactly the kind of place that would attract enough visitors to make it worth the effort.

So after a bit of creative thinking, Dilks' decided to house his dream museum in a recreational vehicle--itself a bit of an antique--and his inaugural tour included a stop at ARRL Headquarters June 16.

"There's too many good collections that don't see the light of day," Dilks says. "I believe in sharing it." Dilks says it's also an opportunity to show newer hams the homebrewing techniques of the earlier generations. "It's a chance to show it off."



Mobile museum curator John Dilks, K2TQN, at the operating position of his 1933 classic ham station. Dilks is an ARRL Life Member and former member of the Board of the Antique Wireless Association.



ARRL HQ staffer John Hennessee, N1KB, admires the museum's display of early receivers.

The theme of Dilks' museum is ham radio before World War II. A "Boatanchors spoken here" sign greets visitors as they step inside.

Among the more unusual pieces aboard are two early receivers. "One is a Patterson," he explains. He also has a Sergeant Model 44 from the late 1930s. "Having the more unusual ones gives visitors a chance to see something they would not normally see," he said. K2TQN's Old Radio Museum contains a few of the old chestnuts as well, including a Hallicrafters SX-28 and a National SW-3. The more noteworthy units are the well-preserved homebrew transmitters, including several breadboard-style units. The museum also includes a smattering of vintage tubes and keys,

plus two spark transmitters and even crystal sets.

But the highlight of the museum-on-wheels is an authentic 1933-style Amateur Radio station. Dilks assembled the station with equipment from several sources. It includes a 1932 Hammarlund Comet Pro receiver, coil box, speaker and QSL card once owned by Dare Aucott, W3CRY, and a homebrew

300-W transmitter built by Joe Hoffman, W2DST, of New York. The table and the 1933 station log book, license, lamp, and chair once were in the shack of Earl Abbott, W2FTT, of Manahawkin, New Jersey. QSL cards of that era line the wall above the station.



A vintage breadboard-style transmitter.

"So, it's really a station that several people owned that's been put together again," Dilks says. He hopes to have the station operational from the R/V by next year.



A visitor to ARRL HQ, Dave Brindle, K1WER, of Nashua, New Hampshire, checks out another vintage station in K2TQN's Old Radio Museum. The station includes a Stancor transmitter and a Silvertone receiver.

A curious historical footnote to the W2DST transmitter: Dilks says Hoffman, who had emigrated to the US from Germany, put away his Amateur Radio gear as World War II was breaking out--lest he be thought a German spy. "Nobody saw the station till a couple years ago when they decided to sell the home, and I was fortunate enough to get the one transmitter out of there," he said.

Dilks hopes to have a vintage station on the air next spring from the Dayton Hamvention flea market. Plans fell through for a Dayton appearance this past May.

Dilks says he does have a vintage

collection at home, but it's not nearly as well-organized as his rolling museum. "I actually have more than I should have for the size of the home that I have," he concedes. "Consequently, it's underfoot." He has some early Amateur Radio equipment in his ham shack, which he shares with the washer and dryer.

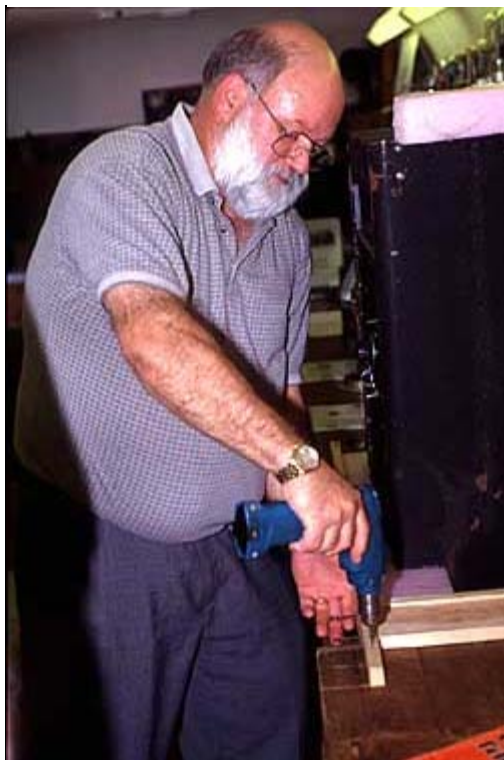


This vintage-style multiwire antenna that adorns the mobile museum stands in stark contrast to the W1AW antennas in the background.

Dilks had to cut short his visit to ARRL HQ after his R/V--a 1973 Dodge-powered unit--developed water pump problems. "It lent itself very nicely to the construction of the museum," he says of the vintage vehicle. Converting it into a museum took about five months. "I tore out the cabinets and everything that was inside and reconstructed everything fresh." He says he designed the layout so there would be plenty of room.

Swaying on two bamboo poles above the R/V's roof is a vintage-style multiwire antenna of the sort that an amateur of the 1920s or 1930s might have used.





Dilks secures a vintage homebrew transmitter--a pair of 807s modulated by a pair of 6L6s--before heading back out on the road.

"It'll be fun someday to load it up and see if it'll work out or not."

Once vehicle repairs are complete, Dilks planned to head off to Maryland for Radioactivity '99 in Burtonsville, followed by a stopover for the Rooster Net 3990 picnic at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. After a break, Dilks' museum will make stops in Pennsylvania and New Jersey before heading off to the big Antique Wireless Association national meet September 1-3 in Rochester, New York.

Dilks remains on the lookout for early amateur gear. "The goal is to change the display once every two years," he said, to keep things fresh for repeat visitors.

For more information, visit the New Jersey Antique Radio Club site, <http://www.eht.com/oldradio>. Contact Dilks via e-mail at [oldradio@comcast.net](mailto:oldradio@comcast.net).

by Rick Lindquist, WW1ME.